

# THE SPIRIT

NEWSLETTER OF THE  
R.E. OLDS TRANSPORTATION MUSEUM

Jul Aug 2021



## How Olds Came To Produce The Model B - by Accident

By Harry LeDuc

Photo Courtesy of the Antique  
Car Museum of Iowa

Remember the straight-dash Oldsmobile, Model B, with its patent leather front? It was a model born of an accident and economy.

The inside story of the old car comes from Theodore E. Barthel, an accountant with Olds from 1900 to 1906. Later on he became general manager and vice president of King Motor Car Co. and of the Peninsula Stove Co. Now retired, he lives at 1256 Whittier.

“In the winter of 1904-05,” Barthel says, “our sales took a decided drop and our commitments for bodies in white wood increased our inventories considerably. We had no storage in Detroit, so the bodies were sent to the Lansing State Fair Grounds. To save space, the bodies --which were the famous Olds curved-dash ones – were placed on end with the curved dash up. We stored several hundred in the exhibition hall.”

“Towards spring a heavy snowstorm struck. The snow piled high on the hall roof. The heavy support timbers let go. Roof and timbers landed on the curved dashes, ruining the curves. After much engineering speculation, it was decided that we could save the bodies by cutting off the front ends and replacing them with patent leather straight fronts.”

“We got credit for something absolutely new in body styling. A Boston man wrote: ‘Your piano-box runabout is the handsomest little machine I ever saw in my life and, if I never have another thing, I must own one this year.’ At the Boston auto show we sold 20 straight-dashed runabouts.”

Oddly, the damaged bodies were the only Model Bs marketed, says Barthel. The company returned to making the curved-dash model.

The archives of the R. E. Olds Transportation Museum contain many newspaper and magazine articles such as this one. The stories that they tell are waiting to be retold. It is with your support that we are able to maintain them for future generations.

240 Museum Drive  
Lansing, MI 48933  
(517)372-0529

#### **Mission Statement**

The purpose of the R.E. Olds Transportation Museum is to collect, preserve, study, and exhibit those objects that will serve to illustrate the part Lansing played in the development of transportation with emphasis on the automobile and its effect on this community and its people.

#### **Museum Hours of Operation**

Tuesday through Saturday: 10 a.m.— 5 p.m.  
Sundays: 12 noon— 5 p.m. (Aug— Oct.)  
Closed major Holidays & Mondays

#### **Admission**

Adults: \$10, Seniors & Students: \$7

Members: Free  
Special group rates and tours available

The R.E. Olds Transportation Museum is a 501(c)(3), non profit organization

#### **Email:**

[autos@reoldsmuseum.org](mailto:autos@reoldsmuseum.org)

#### **Website:**

[www.reoldsmuseum.org](http://www.reoldsmuseum.org)

#### **Executive Director**

Scott Mrdeza

#### **Operations Manager**

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#### **Board of Trustees**

Donald Baron, Gary Doty, Ron Horowitz,

Dick Roth, Justin King, Henry Green,

Lori Lanspeary, Peirre Medawar

Debbie Stephens, Peter Stephens,

## **Director's Corner**

I can sum up the last couple of months in a word....Busy. Not just me, but our staff and our large volunteer group. We had two very successful Cars and Coffee events which were held in the parking lots around the Museum. We reached out to the Lansing Cars and Coffee Facebook Group and had a really good mix of cars and people – young and old (for both the cars and people).

We have been getting some of our cars out to other events. The 1953 NASCAR went to the two day Motor Muster in Greenfield Village in June. The Mama and Baby REOs (now both fully operational) will be going to HCCA/Museum of the Horseless Carriage event at the Gilmore Car Museum from July 15<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup>. They will be reunited with their owners, Debbie and Peter Stephens, who get to see them both run for the first time. This is turning out to be a huge event for both the Museum and the HCCA. Our Raffle Car went to the Westphalia Car Show and the Oldsmobile and Orphans Car Show at the Gilmore Museum where we sold a number of raffle tickets, thanks to the volunteers that drove the car to those events.

Grant requests were approved by the RE Olds Foundation (\$10,000) and the Community Foundation (\$35,000) which will be combined with our restroom donation program (~\$12,000) to help fund our ADA compliant restroom project, which should start in October. We have one more grant request to complete for that project.

Our recently donated vehicles include a 1929 Oldsmobile Landau Motorola Sales car which came with a very nice display cabinet and a 1960 Dynamic 88 Convertible. We are making plans to exhibit those vehicles as we continue to change up our displays. We now have an Oldsmobile Performance line up starting with the 1949 Rocket V8 and finishing up with the Aerotech/Quad 4. Each vehicle has a more descriptive sign using a format that will be expanded to the rest of the Museum displays in time. We will be bringing in a 1983 Toronado with a Hess and Eisenhardt Convertible Conversion that has been stored over in our Annex building the last few years.

On July 1<sup>st</sup>, the Museum hosted the Texas 4000 "Bike for Cancer Prevention" team from the University of Texas for an overnight stay. They were about 2000 miles into their 4000 mile cycling journey and we were able to provide them a dinner and breakfast. TV6 and TV10 both covered the event and interviewed a few of the 19 cyclists.

Our Car Capital Auto Show is on track for July 24<sup>th</sup> at its new location at the Michigan Library and Historical Center. There is still time to

Cont. on page 11

## THE JAPANESE TO TRY AMERICAN AUTOMOBILES

Chicago, Feb 13 – War in the Orient and the automobile show in the Coliseum forged chains of connection yesterday when an order was placed on behalf of the Japanese government with the Olds Motor Works for twenty railroad inspection cars to be forwarded at once. These machines, on of which is on exhibition at the Coliseum, are built like ordinary automobiles of the runabout type, with two seats, placed back-to-back, but instead of the usual tires, they are supplied with grooved iron wheels like those of a railroad car.

“The Japanese government intends to use these for the purpose for which they are manufactured, namely, railroad inspection, pure and simple,” said John L. Poole, representative of the company. “The deal has been on for some time, and was consummated today. The cars are to be used in Manchuria and Korea, as advance guards, in the transportation of war supplies should the Japanese retain a foothold in these territories. They will prove an invaluable aid in inspecting lines before trains loaded with ammunition and provisions and thereby will probably prevent the seizure of supplies by the enemy or save the trains from running into traps the Russians may have set.”

Automobiles of American make were used by the Japanese in the war with China, and negotiations for vehicles of similar construction are now in progress. These war automobiles are to be light strong machines, capable of traveling speedily over all kinds of country in scout service. The inspection cars are of five horse-power and use gasoline. They can develop a speed of thirty mile an hour with four passengers. They are supplied with springs, stuffed leather seats and were sold to the Japanese government for \$450 each.

Lead Daily Call (Lead, South Dakota) Feb 13, 1904

Total production of the Railroad Inspection  
Car was only 127!

We know the destination of a few of these  
cars. At least one was sold to the following  
companies.

Michigan Central RR

Jarrot & Letts

Utah Auto Co

R N Halstead

E S Cobre Mines in Cuba

Virginia & Southwest RR

Jas B Weed & Co

Demerara RR in Guinna

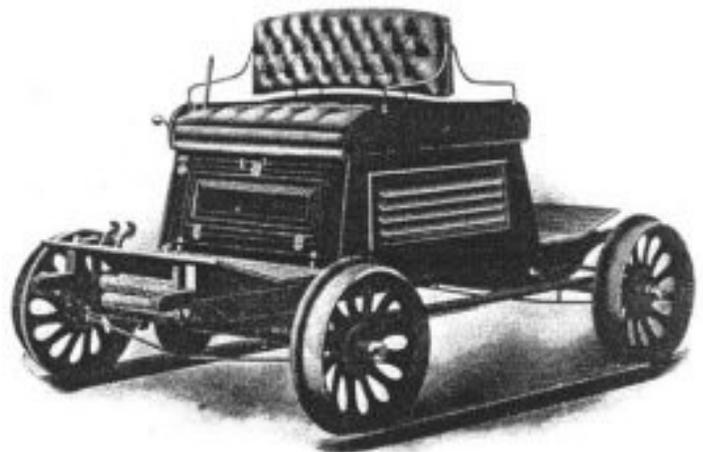
United RR in the Yucatan

“The Denmark Road”

Sierra RR in California

Boston—Albany Line

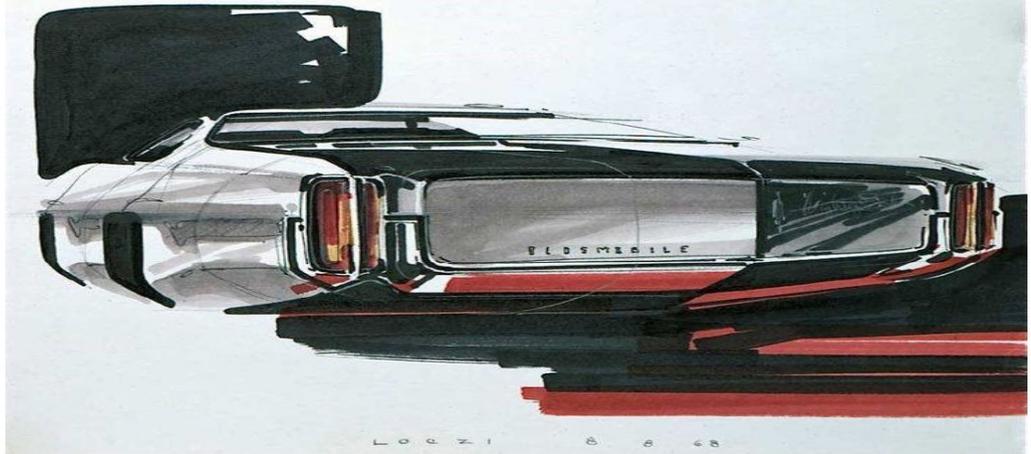
Records also list shipments to Sweden, Brazil,  
and Mexico.



# REOLDS TRANSPORTATION MUSEUM



JULY 24, 2021  
FROM 8 AM TO 5 PM  
AT THE MICHIGAN HISTORICAL  
CENTER  
702 W KALAMAZOO



## Second Quarter Donors

Harv & Judy  
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Thank You For Your Support



**If They Had Built  
It—Would You  
Have Bought It?**

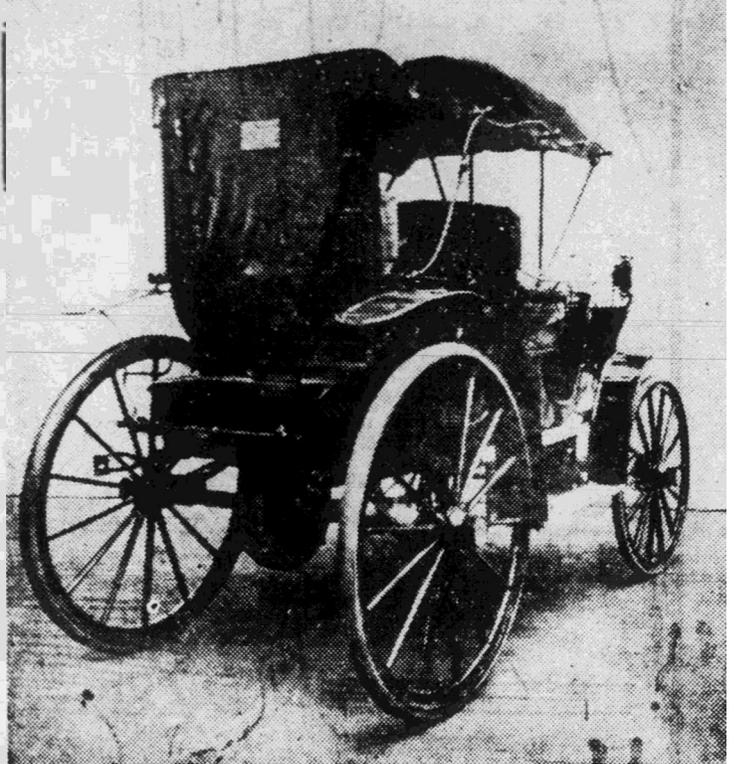
## 1985 OLDSMOBILE FE3-X FIRENZA



2.8L V6 120HP engine. 16" rims with 225/50VR-16 tires. Monochromatic paint, window tinting, functional aero/ground effects package, headlight and grille covers, front air dam, flush emblems, rocker panel extensions, wheelwell evacuation ducts, brake cooling ducts and an adjustable rear deck spoiler

IT CHUGGED,  
COUGHED, SPAT  
FIRE—AND RAN

From Plant Of Baush-  
ke Bros. Came This  
Queer Contraption



This is a 1894 Baushke Automobile. Built in Port Huron Michigan by brothers Lewis and Albert. The car is credited as being the first 5-passenger car built in America (at least considered so by the people of Port Huron) and it featured "friction drive". Only this one car was built and it's maiden trip of 3 or 4 blocks ended when it crashed into the shop wall as it was being parked. It is believed that the car was sold for \$500 to a party in Chicago. It reappeared in 1904 but now credited to have been *newly* built by Elwood Haynes.



## *Auto Adoption Benefactors*

*Don Barron—1950 Oldsmobile Coupe*

*Olds Club of Florida—1906 "Baby" R&O*

*Chuck and Judy Wooderson—1938 Firetruck*

*Ashley Jones—1985 Olds "Darth Vader"*

*Olds Club of Florida—1921 Olds 46J*

## The Jay Leonard Collection

Jay Leonard, an avid Reo collector, recently passed away leaving a life-time collection of Reo material. Thanks to his widow Amy, this material was donated to the R. E. Olds Transportation Museum along with his three Reo autos.

Jim Neal, Reo Historian and Ted Graham, Museum volunteer, journeyed to New Jersey in January to assist in loading Jay's autos on a Reliable truck for the return to Lansing. This included assembling the running gear of one of the cars so that it could be rolled onto the truck. A second trip was made with the same crew plus Scott Mrdeza, Museum Director, in March, to load Jay's trailer with Reo parts and 26 banker boxes of Reo literature, technical papers, Reo Newsletters, memorabilia, etc. and return to Lansing. This was a two day marathon of digging, sorting and loading. It was an interesting drive home pulling an over-loaded trailer with no brakes.

Jay's Reo's are: 1929 Flying Cloud Roadster; 1930 Flying Cloud Coupe and a 1929 Flying Cloud Sedan. The sedan was purchased new by Jay's father and was Jay's ride home from the hospital. It is a survivor.

The Museum Archives is currently sorting, accessioning, and filing the collection so that it will be available for research and answering Reo owner's questions. Much of the literature was rare and needed to fill gaps in our files. Many unique Reo collectables were added to our collections.

Thank you Ted, Jim and Scott and especially Amy (and Jay).



## **REO mower's heritage linked to automotive genius**

The REO mower line's roots stretch back to R.E. Olds, founder of Olds Motor Works and REO Motors. In 1916, Olds won a patent for a large powered roller that propelled the mower forward as it rolled the turf. Powered by an air-cooled gas engine produced by his Ideal Motor Co., the resulting product found strong support in the marketplace, leading to the formation of Ideal Power Lawn Mower Co. in 1922.

Initially clumsy, with a heavy, front-mounted apparatus, Ideal's mower evolved over time. By the 1940s, it resembled a modern reel-type mower with a vertical air-cooled engine purchased from an outside source.

REO Motors, Lansing, Michigan, entered the lawnmower market in 1946, boosted by the expertise of personnel from Ideal. For its mowers, REO initially used engines produced by Clinton and Briggs & Stratton, but in 1949 began producing its own engine, one with a unique slant-head cylinder.

Based at least partially on the success of the new engine, REO mowers soon became the world's leading builder of power lawnmowers, with sales of nearly \$10 million in 1950. By 1951, the company had produced 500,000 mowers, with daily production nearing the 1,000 mark.

In 1954, the REO Mower division was sold to Motor Wheel Corp., Lansing. Motor Wheel continued production of REO mowers, although the company discontinued use of the REO engine in the mid-1950s. In 1963, Motor Wheel sold the line to Wheel Horse Products, South Bend, Indiana. Wheel Horse continued production of the REO line for several years before dropping the REO name from its line. – *Farm Collector staff*



**DOES ANYONE HAVE MORE INFORMATION ON THIS MODEL? IT IS SUPPOSED TO BE A MODEL 426R FROM 1960 MAKING IT A MOTOR WHEEL PRODUCED MOWER.**

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**Drinking Drivers  
Don't You Know  
Great Bangs  
From Little  
Binges Grow?**



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Both Henry Ford and R E Olds were inducted into the Logistics Hall of Fame in 2016. Per their induction information...

Henry Ford and Ransom Eli Olds are considered to be the "inventors of assembly line production". Through their pioneering work in the areas of production logistics and transport, they have revolutionized industry and, in particular, the automotive industry worldwide.

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**RE Visiting the White House in 1924**



Did you know that you can also help support the Museum when you make purchases on Amazon? Go to [Smile.Amazon.com](https://www.smile.amazon.com) and select **Re Olds Museum Assoc Inc** as your charity of choice; .5% of every purchase you make on [Smile.Amazon.com](https://www.smile.amazon.com) will be donated back to the Museum! Don't worry! Item prices are exactly the same in [Smile.Amazon.com](https://www.smile.amazon.com) as on normal Amazon (but make sure to sign in through Amazon Smile)!



sign up to be a participant, otherwise put it on your calendar as a destination for that Saturday.

We've had a few updates at the museum which include a new water line run to the south gallery vehicle entrance door. This will make washing cars a much easier task. We updated all of our building exterior signage. Additionally, the Annex building was updated with a fire detection system. The new roofs that were installed on the buildings 3 years ago, during Bill Adcock's tenure, continue to pay dividends by allowing us to focus efforts elsewhere instead of constantly chasing leaks (thanks Bill).

Although not being here very long, I would suggest our facility is the cleanest it's been with our volunteers replacing a paid service for our office area along with some added emphasis out in the Museum. Besides their time, our volunteers have donated maintenance products, several new advertising signs and a great looking new entryway runner.

Museum visitation is finally picking up and we've recently rented out our 1937 Olds Touring Sedan and our Board Room which helps bring in some extra needed funds. Please keep the Museum in mind for car rentals, events and parties and share that knowledge with your friends to help keep other revenue streams open. Thank you for your continued support and I wish you a safe and enjoyable summer.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Bill Adcock".